

The PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY

THE AMERICAN BOOKTRADE JOURNAL

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Are You Selling Books on Their Style Appeal?

Ruth Leigh

IT seems almost incongruous to use the word "style" in connection with book-selling, yet no one engaged in modern retailing can fail to recognize the tremendous importance of style today in merchandising to the public. According to experts, it is the most dominant appeal in selling to the present-day public—not only in wearing apparel, but also in every other line of merchandise.

Ten years ago, for instance, no one thought of selling more kitchen ware on the style appeal of brightly colored pots and pans, or considered an automobile because it had smart lines or a fashionable color scheme. It would have been thought comic to buy a kodak because it matched one's sports costume, or a blue typewriter because it fitted the decorative scheme of a room. Our grandmothers never heard of bath towels designed by some of our foremost artists or electric fixtures designed by cartoonists.

Nevertheless, style has been injected into practically every kind of merchandise in the modern store. Style arguments

supersede every other argument in retail selling today. All this has produced a public that is more sophisticated, has better taste, and is more style conscious in all lines of merchandise than has ever before been known in the history of this country.

ARE you selling books on their style appeal? If not you should, believes Ruth Leigh, for the most dominant element in selling anything today is style. Mrs. Leigh is one whose word should be taken. She is an expert on merchandising. Her books, "Elements of Retailing" and "The Human Side of Retailing," Appleton, are on every alert retailer's bookshelf. In this article she suggests that the seller appeal to the human side of the customer and play up the style for which there is such a demand.

Naturally, this modern, style-conscious public with its critical tastes is creating new, different merchandising conditions—even for booksellers. If people are living differently, thinking along new lines, buying goods for new and different reasons, an alert bookseller, sensitive to changing conditions, will want to adjust his merchandising, if only to capitalize on the changing ideas of a style-conscious public.

Sell books on the style basis? It seems absurd, on the face of it. Yet the style argument in selling books, although not a new one, is more potent than ever before.

"Style," according to a famous chain-store expert, "is whatever the people want today." Every intelligent bookseller knows that the great majority of people want to read what is "new," "recent," "popular."

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Forthcoming Issues

✿ ✿ ✿ The author of the leading article in next week's issue is Henry Lanier, who founded and edited until very recently *The Golden Book*. *The Golden Book* was an original publishing idea, a revival of classic novels and short stories that would please the taste of today. Mr. Lanier, who is the son of Sidney Lanier, was once in the editorial and advertising departments of Scribner's and for many years secretary of Doubleday, Page & Co. The title of Mr. Lanier's article is "The Public Taste for Standard Literature." ✿ ✿ ✿

✿ ✿ ✿ Ralph W. Cram, editor of the Davenport, Ia., *Democrat and Leader*, has written for the next issue an article on book publicity. It is titled "The Editor and the Literary Press Agent." ✿ ✿ ✿

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